

THE MONETT TIMES

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The Girl Who Would But Didn't

By E. M. WICKES

(Copyright, 1910, by the Associated Lit-
erary Press.)

Irene Havil would not have been disturbed if she had not sung at the village entertainment and unfortunately met a third-class actor who, for the lack of something better to say, told her that if she cultivated her vocal powers she had a bright future before her as a prima donna.

The thespian disappeared the following day, but his careless talk left her dreaming of operatic tours through America and Europe.

When the idea became rooted in her brain no amount of argument could convince her that she was not destined to be a theatrical celebrity. The result was that she returned her engagement ring with a note to Clyde Grendon, her fiancé, informing him that the engagement was broken and that she was going to New York to seek fame and fortune.

Clyde received her message on the morning of the day set for their wedding and spent the ensuing two hours scheming how to circumvent her plan.

At one o'clock he called at the house where she lived with her aunt and uncle, and persuaded her to accompany him for a walk to discuss the matter.

Very little was said after leaving the house, from where they traveled to the shore of a lake that had been the scene of many happy hours.

"Do you know," he began, as she listlessly sat down on a bench, "that



"I Don't Believe It."

you are about to take a step which you will probably regret for the remainder of your life?"

"I don't believe it," she answered, without the semblance of a smile, that usually played around her mouth. "You just said that to make me change my mind, but I shall not. Other girls have succeeded, so why shouldn't I?"

"So they have," he admitted, "but they have spent years in study under the best masters. Even then it has been a hard, uphill fight filled with discouragement and disappointment."

She was silent for a moment as she plucked the petals of a rose and the overhanging branches caressed her chestnut hair.

"I don't expect my pathway to be strewn with roses," she replied. "I anticipate some hard knocks, but I am willing to endure them rather than throw away a career and settle down to married life."

"Yes, but you have not the slightest idea with what you will have to contend," he persisted. "You will require years of training and will have to work very hard to pay for the same. As a novice you will wander from manager to manager, only to be met with smiles and promises that will evaporate in the breeze that follows you out the door. Like thousands of others, you will be forced into office work as a means of a livelihood, as you will be too proud to return and admit failure."

The girl sat with bowed head, seemingly drinking in every word.

Clyde produced a small plush box containing the engagement ring, and, holding it in his outstretched palm, continued:

"When I gave you this I thought it sealed our happiness. But how little you must have regarded it when the silly bubble of a thoughtless stranger could induce you to

send it back and renounce the love you once appeared so happy to possess."

She threw away the mutilated flower and slowly raised her eyes.

"Clyde," she spoke in tremulous tone, "I know how dearly you love me, and I appreciate the pains that you have taken to make me happy; and, although I am going away, it is not because I do not care for you, but for the reason that I have my mind set on a career. I am awfully sorry that I had to return the ring, but under the circumstances it was inevitable. Perhaps you will meet in time a girl who will teach you to forget me."

"But don't you—" he abruptly ended, hearing approaching footsteps.

Clyde released Irene's hand as a ragged tramp with a stubby beard hove in view, and, on coming abreast of the lovers, faced them and said:

"Excuse me, pal, for butting in, but can you help a poor hungry man to get something to eat? I haven't tasted a bite in two days."

"I am sorry, my good fellow," returned Clyde, after searching his pockets, "but I haven't any change. Here, take this," he added, as, if struck with a sudden thought, offering the box to the wanderer. "I haven't any further use for it and you can probably sell it for a tidy sum."

As the stranger accepted the gift, Irene sat motionless, calmly watching the proceedings.

The tramp cautiously opened the box, as if fearing a trick, and when his eyes fell upon the glittering stone his head bobbed back with surprise.

"Gee, but this looks like the real stuff!" he exclaimed. "Say, boss, do you mean to say that I can have this?"

"Yes," Clyde assured him, with a careless nod. "The girl for whom it was purchased doesn't want it, neither do I."

The tramp's features broke into a smile as he remarked:

"I suppose it was meant for some girl who doesn't know a good fellow when she meets one and you don't want to give your friend any second-hand goods. Well, that's right, and I don't blame her for wanting one bought especially for herself."

"It does not concern you for whom it was bought," responded Clyde. "It is now yours and you can do as you like with it."

"I'm not trying to butt in to your business, partner," laughed the tramp, "but I had to say something, and I know what it is to get the cold shoulder. You see, I wasn't always a tramp. I once had a good business, and loved a girl, and we would have been married, only she got a notion in her head that she was born to be an actress and left me. I never heard of her until five years later, when I was called to New York to save her from potter's field. That's why I'm a tramp and have lost faith in women. I think the lady by your side is an exception, for she doesn't look like one who would fool with a man's heart. But, shucks, I won't bother you any more with my past. I'm obliged for the ring," he finished, turning to go.

"Please stop a moment!" cried Irene, springing to her feet.

The tramp swung around and waited.

"Will you kindly give me the ring?" she asked. "It was bought for me and I am anxious to wear it."

"Well, you see, lady," the tramp replied, "the gentleman gave it to me, but if he wants you to have it all he has to do is say so."

Irene cast an appealing glance as much as to say: "Tell him to give it to me."

"Do you really want it, Irene?" questioned Clyde, rising to his feet. "Have you changed your mind about going away? And will you carry out what we had planned for tonight?"

"Yes, Clyde, I do want it, and I am sorry that I ever thought of going away. I am glad that I saw my mistake in time."

Clyde took a five-dollar bill from his pocket, and, offering it to the tramp, said:

"Mr. good fellow, there has been a misunderstanding between us which has been smoothed over, and if you will give me the ring you can have this money."

The tramp readily agreed to the exchange, and, after wishing them luck, went on his way.

That night, at the wedding, Irene never dreamed that Arthur Rankin the best man, who was an old college chum of Clyde's, had that afternoon impersonated the tramp.

EASTERN STAR ELECTION

The Monett Eastern Star Chapter met on Monday evening and elected officers for the following year. There was a good attendance and they spent a pleasant evening.

The following officers were elected:—Mrs. E. S. Wilson, worthy matron; R. C. Farrow, worthy patron; Mrs. W. J. Hobbs, associate matron; Mrs. R. C. Farrow, conductress; Mrs. Dio Stone, associate conductress; Mrs. Laura Leckie, secretary; Mrs. S. A. Mott, treasurer.

M. W. A. ELECTION

The Modern Woodmen met Monday evening and elected the following officers:—Shaffnett, V. C.; Alcock, W. A.; E. G. Utter, P. C.; Joe Amber, Banker; M. Loutzenhiser, clerk; Guy Ivey, escort; Delzell, watchman; Smithe, sentry; E. E. Dennis, Chas. Patterson and John Salzer, managers; Drs. C. T. Dusenbury and D. E. Miller, physicians.

VIOLIN INSTRUCTION

Miss Pearl Lay, of Aurora, will be in Monett each Tuesday to give instruction on Violin. Mrs. F. P. Sizer, teacher. 274 6

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